

Lake Michigan Fisheries Team

February 26, 1999 -- Mishicott

Notes

(prepared by Bill Horns, March 1, 1999)

These meeting notes are not intended to provide a full summary of all discussions, but to relay essential information, record all LMFT decisions, and remind the Team of work commitments that were made at the meeting. Our next meeting will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday, April 29, at a Sheboygan location yet to be determined.

DECISION/ACTION ITEMS

- 1) Lake trout bag limit. We discussed the request from the Wisconsin Federation of Great Lakes Sport Fishing Clubs that we consider increasing the lake trout bag limit as a way of reducing predation on alewives. The unanimous Team recommendation was that the bag limit not be increased. Among the considerations was the fact that the estimated total sport fishing lake trout harvest (creel, moored boats, charter) in 1998 was 82,247, exceeding the maximum considered consistent with the current lakewide management agreement, *A Lakewide Management Plan for Lake Trout Rehabilitation in Lake Michigan*. I will prepare a letter to the Federation for Mike Staggs' signature.
- 2) Care and feeding of *das boot*. We discussed use and maintenance of the boat currently being acquired for use in Green Bay and in the Milwaukee area. A boat planning group comprised of Brian Belonger, Jim Francis, and Don Beilfus was designated and given the charge of developing a) a budget for boat operation and maintenance and b) an operation plan, including specification of a winter storage location.
- 3) Work planning. We reviewed project proposals under three funding categories, "Great Lakes Trout and Salmon Ecological Information", "Commercial Fishing", and "Great Lakes Sports Ecological Information". I have summarize the Team's recommendations in a separate document.
- 4) Brown trout. Steve Fajfer, Brian Belonger, and Mike Toney presented information about production, stocking, movements, and harvest of brown trout. Because of the complexity of the issue, the Team formed "Team Brown Trout" to develop a brown trout management plan. Team Members: Jim Moore (chairman), Brian Belonger, Steve Fajfer, Jim Francis, Sue Marcquenski, and Brad Eggold. Team Charge: Review available information on production, stocking, and harvest of brown trout, and document problems. Write a brown trout management plan for Green Bay and Lake Michigan, addressing strain management, size-at-stocking, hatchery issues, age-at-stocking (fall fingerling vs spring yearling), distribution of stocking, and stocking strategies. Timetable: The Team will, by July of this year, develop specific

recommendations regarding production issues that need to be addressed at the August production meeting. A final report will be completed by July 1, 2000.

- 5) Steelhead management plan. The Team endorsed the draft *Steelhead/Rainbow Fisheries Management Plan*, subject to final editorial changes. The Team will, at future meetings, discuss issues and trade-offs related to the selection and possible stocking of a nearshore rainbow strain.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 6) Whitefish trawling study guidelines. We briefly discussed Mike LeClair's continuing interest in developing a whitefish trawling study for next winter. He is working with Chris Hartleb to develop a specific proposal. I mentioned a collection of papers on "Effects of mobile fishing gear on marine benthos", recently published in *Conservation Biology*. My second thought on this issue is that we should discuss it more, so I'll bring it up at a future meeting.
- 7) Whitefish quota increase. The Natural Resources Board has adopted the rule increasing the whitefish harvest limit and increasing the maximum depth for trap nets. I raised two questions for discussion: a) What will be the amount and quality of data to evaluate the maximum trap net depth issue in four years? b) Are there steps the Department can take, by rule-making or otherwise, to further discourage or limit the use of large-mesh gill nets?
- 8) Chub fishing rules. The two-year study of incidental mortality in the chub fishery will be completed this summer and the sun sets on the current expanded winter chub fishing at the end of the 1999-2000 commercial fishing year.
- 9) Preparation for the Lake Michigan Committee meeting in March. There was a brief discussion of this issue. A lakewide workshop on monitoring of BKD was suggested.
- 10) Walleye stocking in tributaries. Tom Soles of Walleyes for Tomorrow has asked us to consider working with that group to begin stocking walleyes in Lake Michigan tributaries. We discussed the issue, but there was no support within the Team for walleye stocking in Lake Michigan tributaries. Mike Toneys will draft a letter to Tom Soles for Mike Staggs signature.
- 11) We discussed the practice among some commercial fishers of not reporting chubs harvested and stripped for roe, but then discarded in the lake. Tom Hansen will request an opinion from Legal Services about this.
- 12) We discussed the practice, by some commercial fishers who control more than one admiral chub quota, of consolidating admiral chub quotas onto one license in order fish the racehorse quota with another license.